SIDE EFFECTS

Prostate cancer treatment can cause short-term and long-term side effects. Below are common side effects and information about how to treat or manage them. Talk to your health care team about the right options for you.

SIDE EFFECTS OF PROSTATE CANCER DRUGS

Medications prescribed for prostate cancer, including chemotherapy, hormonal therapy and drugs to treat bone metastases, have varying side effects.

FATIGUE

Fatigue, or extreme tiredness, is a side effect of radiation therapy and certain prostate cancer drugs, as well as an effect of cancer itself. Regular exercise (aerobic and weight-bearing) can help reduce fatigue and improve energy levels during and after your treatment. To avoid injury, talk to your doctor before you start or modify your exercise program. They can offer advice on activities and the frequency and intensity of your workouts.

SEXUAL SIDE EFFECTS

Prostate cancer treatment can cause sexual side effects, including erectile dysfunction (ED), decreased sex drive (libido) and infertility.
SIDE EFFECTS

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is the inability to achieve an erection or maintain it long enough for sexual intercourse. Some treatments for prostate cancer can cause ED:

- Radical prostatectomy, surgery that removes the prostate gland, the seminal vesicles and part of the urethra, is the most common cause of erectile dysfunction. The severity depends on the procedure’s impact on the arteries and nerves that control erections. Most men who receive “nerve-sparing” surgery experience improvement over time (recovery may take a couple of years). Some men never recover the ability to have a spontaneous erection.

- Radiation or brachytherapy can damage nerves and blood vessels, causing ED. Many men can achieve an erection with prescription medication.

- Hormone treatments lower testosterone levels, which can cause ED and lower libido. Men with prostate cancer should not receive testosterone therapy, since this can encourage the growth of cancerous cells. Ask your doctor about treatment options.
There are several treatments available to help treat ED. Discuss your options with your doctor.

### Medical Treatment for Erectile Dysfunction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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| **PDE5 Inhibitors** (Cialis, Levitra, Staxyn, Viagra) | • Success rate for full intercourse 40-60%  
• Minimally invasive (easy to take)  
• Maintain spontaneity | • May not work  
• Cost  
• Can’t be taken with nitrate medications  
• Won’t work if erection nerves removed |
| **Penile Injections**            | • Success rates up to 85%  
• Can work even if erection nerves removed/damaged  
• Useful if can’t take PDE5 inhibitors | • Penis discomfort  
• May not work  
• Cost  
• Risk of prolonged, inappropriate erection  
• Scar tissue in 10-15%, which can curve penis  
• Fainting (rare) |
| **Medicated Urethral System for Erection** | • 57% success rate  
• No needle  
• Can work even if erection nerves removed/damaged  
• Useful if can’t take PDE5 inhibitors | • Penis discomfort  
• May not work  
• Cost |
| **Vacuum Constructive Devices**  | • Success rates 85-92%  
• Do not require medication or surgery | • Cost  
• Can cause bruising  
• Can’t be left on longer than 30 minutes  
• Can’t use with blood thinners  
• Penis may be cool to the touch so not a natural feel |
| **Penile Prosthesis**            | • 85% satisfaction rates reported  
• One-time surgery  
• Avoids risk of curved penis caused by penile injections  
• More relaxed foreplay with no change in skin sensation | • Infection in approximately 2% of men, requiring removal of the prosthesis  
• 15% of implants fail, and surgery is required to repair/remove prosthesis; may be embarrassing with new partner |